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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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SUBJECT: Fortnightly Newsletter - December 16 - 29, 1951

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The Five Elected Lagos Members (all NCNC'ers) of the Western House Can Now Decide Among Themselves as to Which Two to Send to the House of Representatives.

If the five Lagos members should agree among themselves to present two of their number for election to the House, the President shall declare them elected automatically, without further recourse to election by the whole House, according to official pronouncement.

This was a bombshell dropped in the camp of the AG when new regulations made under the Nigeria (Constitution) Order in Council 1951 were gazetted last week. Previously it was thought that the fate of every man going to the Central House rests on majority vote in the Western House. This means that AG cannot stop Zik from going to the Central House if his party rules that he should be one of the two to go.

The NCNC had already decided that Zik and Adedoyin should go to the House. One of the other elected Lagos members, Dr. Nimbe, Mayor of Lagos does not seem disposed to accept the decision of his party. He is reported to be looking outside his party for chances of going to the Central House. The remaining two elected members have bowed out, in line with the decision of the party.

The NCNC has decided that Dr. Nimbe should not go to the Central House and that if Nimbe puts himself up for the House, he will be expelled from the party.

Action Group Says that the Much-Desired Meetin s With Lt. Governor on Organization of Western House, Were Cordial.

Officials of the Action Group, who claim a majority in the Western House, and who had complained that the Lt. Governor of the Western Region had slighted their group by not consulting with them in connection with organization of the Western House, reported a

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first that two cordial meetings with the latter official were held.

It is understood that the discussions have centered around the selection of Ministers for the Western Regional Executive Council and the appointment of the President of the Western House of Assembly. Other subjects discussed were the distribution of portfolios, the standing rules, and other constitutional matters affecting the conduct of business in the Regional Legislature.

The Era of Consultation, Between British Government Officials and Local Political Organizations, Seems Here to Stay.

A fundamental change of the times appears to be taking place at the moment affecting control of Nigeria's affairs, i.e., the "era of consultation" seems to be here. As indicated in above item, British officials have seen fit to consult with leaders of a political party (AG) concerning the political organization of a legislative body (the Western Region), prior to the first meeting of the latter (the Western House of Assembly, in early January). This is rather interesting and the Africans state that the days when precipitate action on delicate problems could be taken by the Central and Regional administrations, are gone.

The African people feel that party leaders and other Africans who can speak for Nigerian public opinion will have to be consulted from now on, and their opinions respected if the new constitution is to be a success. These changing circumstances appear to be understood by the British officials administering the Government. Political leaders, particularly those with majorities in legislatures (true in the case of AG in the Western Region) are insisting that due deference should be made to their opinions.

AG Decides to Send Special Representative to England to Make Known AG Demands of Colonial Secretary.

Samuel AKINTOLA, as Envoy Extraordinary of the AG in Western Nigeria, has been sent to London to present the case of his party for self government. The three principal demands to be presented are:

1. Abolition of Governor's veto powers;
2. Recognition of African Ministers as Superiors of Departmental heads;
3. Withdrawal of senior administrative officers from Western Nigeria.

Apparently leaders of the AG were not entirely satisfied with the results of their recent meetings with the Lt. Governor of the

Western region (discussed above), and accordingly decided to go straight to London with their demands. The Government is not likely to abolish the Governor's veto power, and will probably limit its actions to the provisions of the new constitution.

Action Group Indicates that Zik Should Join Them if He Really Wishes to Cooperate.

As regards Dr. Azikiwe's recent offer to cooperate with the Action Group, a person named Olatunji DOSUMA, presumably with the consent of AG, has made a long newspaper reply to Azikiwe, stating that if Azikiwe really wishes to cooperate, to give it the majority needed to fight the so-called MacPherson constitution, the NCNC'ers should give a positive and practical demonstration by enrolling en bloc in the Action Group. This, of course, is not likely to make much of an impression on Zik.

Coordination of Government Policy in New Constitutional Setup Will be Sole Responsibility of the Lt. Governors in the Three Respective Regions.

This being the case there is a feeling that it will be almost impossible for any one party to control policy, even though a party has a majority, such as AG in the Western Region. Many Africans feel that "No Nigerian is anything under the New Constitution", even Ministers.

Possible Successors to Current Lieutenant-Governors.

It is anticipated that all three present Lieutenant-Governors will retire within a few months. A local published report predicted that Mr. Hugo Marshall, current Administrative Secretary, will be appointed to take the place of Sir Chandos Hoskyns-Abrahall in the West, that Mr. C. J. Pleas, CMG, the present Eastern Development Secretary, will replace Commander Pyke-Nott in the East, and probably Mr. B. E. Sharwood-Smith will replace Sir Eric Thompstone, KBE, CMG, MC, in the North.

Lagos Town Council Formally Brought Under Control of Western Government.

On Tuesday, December 18, the Lagos Local Government Ordinance was amended to bring the Lagos Town Council formally under the direct control of the Regional Government of the Western Region. Directly superior to the Lagos Town Council will be the Executive Council of the Western Region which will hold financial control, will be able to dissolve the council when that body does not discharge its functions "in a manner conducive to the welfare of the town" and which will be responsible for the appointment of a chief

electoral officer for the Lagos Town Council elections. The former "Commissioner of the Colony" will now be known as "Administrator of the Colony" and his deputy is now "Senior District Officer, Colony".

The CPP (Convention Peoples Party) of Nigeria is Inaugurated.

This new organization came into being on December 19, 1951, with most of the delegates being ex-sedition convicts. Several speakers were representatives of the Gold Coast CPP. As far as can be learned no important local politicians are associated with the new organization.

ECONOMIC

Christmas Business Was Good in Lagos.

Although the country was in the throes of a railway engine drivers' strike, Christmas business generally in the port city of Lagos was very good where stocks of goods were reported ample. The same was not true of the interior, however, where there were marked shortages of specialty imported goods for Christmas, because of the strike. Likewise, the Lagos trade in articles customarily received from the interior was adversely affected, -- foodstuffs principally.

W.A.A.C. Orders "Marathon" Aircraft.

West African Airways Corporation has ordered four Marathon Airdraft, delivery of which is expected in March of 1952. The Marathon is an enlarged, four-engine, version of the DeHavilland Dove. This plane will supplement, and not replace, the Doves now in service, by providing greater capacity on the busier internal Nigerian routes.

Progress on New Runway at Kano.

Construction of the new run-way at Kano airport should proceed more rapidly in the future since new earth-moving machinery has now been shifted to the project. The prolonged rainy season has slowed the work considerably but now that the rain has stopped the gravel foundation for the laterite top should be completed in three or four months.

Socony-Vacuum Oil Company to Incorporate in Nigeria.

Socony-Vacuum Oil Company is now in the process of incorporating under the laws of Nigeria, a move necessitated by a "show cause" notice given the company by the Nigerian Registrar of Companies.

This transfer of place of incorporation from the United States to Nigeria will result in a new name: "Socony-Vacuum Oil Company (Nigeria) Limited".

New "United Africa Company" Loan to Benefit West Africa.

An unspecified portion of the £19 million loan which Lever Brothers is raising (by the issue of £15 million debenture stocks) will be used to finance the building of new sawmills in Nigeria, development of plantations of all kinds in the Cameroons and the building of ocean and river fleets.

Order in Council Allocates Revenue to Regions Under New Constitution

By an Order in Council of December 4, 1951, the Government of the United Kingdom accepted the recommendations of the so-called "Hicks Commission" almost intact for the establishment of Nigerian revenue allocation under the new constitution. (For details see CONGEN despatch No. 238 of December 18, 1951).

LABOR

Labor Situation Characterized by Series of Strike Threats

The past few weeks have witnessed a series of strikes ofand threats from various trade union organizations. These included the Pharmacists Union and various railway unions (reported in detail below.)

It is the opinion of the workers that (1) there is something decidedly wrong with the economic system whereby the national income is unequally distributed; (2) there has been a lack of knowledge on the part of Government in the way labor questions should be handled and a lack of interest in and sympathy with the workers' problems and conditions; and (3) there is no effort to understand the workers' point of view. There are, of course, two sides to this question.

In the writers' opinion the major reason for the present labor impasse is the lack of highly trained and experienced labor negotiators on the part of both labor and government. There appear to be no real experts on either side.

The "GO-SLOW" Railway Engine Drivers' Strike Is Still on, With No Settlement in Sight. Other Railway Unions Have Gone on Sympathetic Strikes.

The Africans feel that conciliatory talks between management and labor should be headed by Africans exclusively. Railway management is headed by white, Nigerian Government officials, and the same is, of course true of the Department of Labor and the office

of the Civil Service Commissioner, which are the other two units concerned.

The Africans feel that the cards are stacked against them in controversies such as the present one; that their white adversaries are not sympathetic to their rights and needs; that the latter are highly inefficient conciliators; that they make no attempt to understand the psychology of the Africans; that management threats will get nowhere; that there is a complete lack of good will and understanding on the part of the British; that the conciliation machinery is highly defective because of undue arrogance on the part of management; that the British are out to wipe out trade unionism in Nigeria; that those engineers already dismissed should be reinstated; and that if no effective machinery is set up to handle fair conciliatory talks, the Government must take the blame for the consequences, as the workers mean to hold out this time.

It is known that this strike is giving much concern to top officials, as the effects, at this time, of a prolonged strike could be disastrous politically and economically. The Government maintains that it is ready, willing and anxious to arrive at a "just" settlement of the dispute based on the railway's capacity to meet the stated needs of the workers. In fact the strike seems to be based on what could be considered "just". It is known that the Government has dismissed a number of the engine drivers participating in the "Go-Slow" to punish the members of the African Locomotive Drivers Union who are leading the strike.

Other Railway Unions, such as the Nigeria Union of Railwaymen, and the union which represents the clerical employees of the railway, have gone on sympathetic strikes to support the case of the African Locomotive Drivers Union.

During the past week numerous talks have been held, and secrecy seems to have been enjoined on both parties to the dispute. The press feels that there are some signs that an amicable settlement may soon be reached, but does not indicate the basis.

The bad effects of the strike are beginning to be felt by the workers themselves, and the populace in general. These include higher prices and scarcity of some food items.

The Government's position is delicate because of the question of "face" and "prestige". In granting concessions many feel that they lose face and prestige.

For a limited time, the Government has stated that it is quite willing to "re-employ" the 38 engine drivers which have thus far been dismissed, but that it is not willing to "reinstate" the strikers. This means that they will lose their pension and seniority

rights. The Government has threatened to withdraw even the re-employment offer if the strike is not ended soon. In this regard the Union told the press on Christmas Day that the strike would not be terminated until Government agreed to "reinstate" the workers.

The workers have turned down arbitration, feeling that they can do better in direct negotiation with management.

Leaders of the strike are reported now to realize that they have manoeuvred their members into a disastrous position, not only for them but for the whole trade union movement in Nigeria.

Essential coal and goods trains have continued to operate in several sections of the country, but most passenger schedules have been cancelled.

The strikers say that the Government is reporting the effects of the strike as glaringly as possible in order to justify any future steps taken. The Government may declare some sort of an emergency very soon.

Nduka Eze Acquitted.

The tril of Nduka Eze, pro-communist ex-labor leader, on the charge of obtaining £300 by false pretenses ended with the acquittal of Mr. Eze when the judge concluded that the prosecution had failed to prove its charges and that there was accordingly no case to answer. After the trial Eze announced in a very flowery valedictory that he is "returning to private life", which means he will stand clear of politics for a while.

OTHER

Government Moves Against "Prince Orizu" and His "Council on African Education".

In 1945, Nwafor Orizu returned to Nigeria from the United States, where he had obtained his M.A. at Ohio and his LL.D. at Lane University, and announced a scheme whereby he would award scholarships to Nigerian students to study in American universities. Several such scholarships were eventually awarded but complaints about shortages of funds among the sponsored students led the Nigerian Government in June of this year to announce withdrawal of its facilities from the students involved and to request Orizu's organization, the "American Council on African Education", to produce an account of its funds. Repeated demands by Government have produced no account and accordingly the Government has issued a notice requesting that all persons who have contributed to Orizu's scholarship scheme in any fashion to come forward and give evidence as to the amounts and dates involved. The apparent intent is either to force Orizu to turn his account

over to Government rapidly or to gather the data necessary for possible indictment.

Activities of African Academy of Arts and Research Curtailed.

The Nigerian Government informed the AAAR in a letter dated November 22 that unless the Academy announces within one month that it will no longer grant scholarships to African students for studies in the United States, the Government will be compelled to announce its withdrawal of all facilities from Academy-sponsored students in the United States. The letter also requested the AAAR to make final proposals regarding the future of "Africa House" in New York City. The "facilities" referred to are exchange control grants. Mr. K. Ozuomba Mbadiwe, President of the AAAR, announced shortly thereafter that the Academy's convention, meeting on December 15, will consider the Government's statement and announce its decision.

Ex-Police Corporal Convicted in Passport Theft Case.

Ex-Police Corporal Busari has been convicted on each of ten counts of forging passport forms and making false entries in the passport register. He has been sentenced to three years imprisonment on each of the counts; however, these sentences will run concurrently. The judge in delivering his verdict announced that he was satisfied that the passports in evidence had been forged by Busari, that the handwriting in the passports was that of Busari and that his defense of only having obeyed orders from his superior was a malicious attempt to implicate innocent parties.

Possible Removal of Restrictions on Missionary Educational Activities in the Northern Province.

The western press has, during the past two weeks, exhibited an unusual interest in the problem of education in the Northern Region. The General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Teachers has urged that the current restrictions on missionary educational activities in the Northern Provinces of Adamawa, Bauchi, Bornu, Sokoto, Kano and Zaria be removed. These restrictions, which are the result of the arrangement between the British authorities and the Emirs of these Muslim areas, prhobit missionary work of any sort without the written consent of the Resident Officer concerned, who in turn would obtain the consent of the local Emir.

Yoruba Interest in Revision of Territorial Boundary Between West and North.

The Egbe Omo Oduduwa has announced that it intends to make representations to the Governor with the purpose of obtaining a

revision of the boundary between the North and the West so that all Yorubas currently grouped with the Northerners for administrative purposes may be regrouped under the control of the Yoruba West.

There is Government Scandal in Lagos Also.

Scandals concerning Government officials are not confined to Washington. In Lagos the opposition says that Dr. Nimbe, Mayor of Lagos, has successfully evaded paying his township and water taxes for thirty months. The Mayor is head of the Lagos Town Council.

A. W. Childs
Consul General

Copy to Embassy London.